

in math and 16th in science in standardized tests among 21 countries.

When it comes to cultivating qualified workers for high-tech jobs, California, like many other high-tech oriented states, lags behind many of our foreign competitors. Although there has been some progress, California and other states continue to struggle with creating a solid and educated high-tech workforce. The key is developing core competencies in technical areas such as math, science, and the use of technology.

Without fundamental change, I am concerned about the continued vitality of our high-tech industry and its ability to attract an educated high-tech workforce. In California and throughout the U.S., the high-tech industry continues to experience a shortage of qualified workers. How long can we rely on other countries to fill our job vacancies without harming our own competitiveness? Right now, foreign nationals receive nearly half of all doctoral degrees and a third of all masters degrees awarded by U.S. universities.

I believe that we—educators, business people and political leaders—must come up with a new educational agenda and the will to implement it. Our educational system, from kindergarten to the college level must encourage Americans to study math and sciences so that they can have access to the abundance of high-paying job opportunities in the high-tech industry.

It is alarming that despite all the opportunities available to people with degrees in math, engineering and physics, colleges are graduating fewer and fewer American students with these majors. In fact, high-tech degrees from American institutions have actually decreased 5 percent from 1990–1996. Although California colleges and universities conferred the most high-tech degrees, they also had had one of the steepest declines, awarding 1,600 fewer degrees in 1996 than in 1990.

Our economic security demands that we find solutions to this crisis. A world class, K–12 public school educational system is not beyond our grasp. What has eluded us is national commitment. We tend to talk about educational excellence but have been unwilling to provide the funds that are critical to this objective. And we have failed to rally parents and business as true partners in what must be a coordinated and creative national effort. The 106th Congress has an obligation and an opportunity to make “educational excellence” one of its highest priorities. This means we need to assure that we have qualified teachers in our classrooms, that students meet basic competencies and that attention is given to the evolving needs of the high-tech industry.

Our children and our grandchildren will be the true beneficiaries of this legacy if we are bold enough to meet the challenge.

THE NATIONAL YOUTH VIOLENCE
COMMISSION

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 9, 1999

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, the Columbine High School tragedy and its after-

shocks still haunt our memories. Statesmen, pundits and ordinary citizens ask questions every day as to why our children are murdering their peers. Clearly, the mere fact that we must ask these questions demonstrates that a real crisis exists and needs to be addressed immediately. While no one has any definitive answers, many opinions have been put forth without reaching any consensus. These opinions are multi-faceted and have included: the de-moralization and de-humanization of our youth due to a “culture of violence” perpetuated by the media, the non-enforcement of existing laws regarding firearms, and the degradation of families and communities due to this “culture of violence.”

All of these opinions likely point to sources of the problem of teen violence, but they do not reveal the possibility of one single and simple solution. In order to put a halt to the specter of teen violence, an investigation should be made into its causes and to its probable solutions. Such a Commission should be bi-partisan, and it should be appointed equally by the President of the United States and Leaders in Congress from both the Majority and Minority parties. In the best interests of the Nation, the Commission will come to some form of a consensus concerning the various natures of, and the solutions to, the extreme teen violence that is plaguing our society.

These tragedies are too important to ignore, and too important not to focus all of our resources on discovering their root causes and possible solutions. That is why I, along with Representatives MARKEY and TIERNEY, am introducing legislation to create a national Commission that will be asked to conduct an in-depth analysis of teen violence. The Commission would be made up of a panel of experts that include religious figures, teachers, law enforcement officials, counselors, psychologists, and research groups that deal with family issues. Hopefully, a Commission that contains such experts will be able to appraise the situation accurately and make the necessary recommendations.

Upon completion of its work, the commission will be responsible for submitting to Congress and the President a report detailing possible steps to reduce the level of juvenile violence in America. While this is not a problem that will be solved overnight, and there are some serious ideological differences that need be overcome, I am hopeful that this Commission can help us in preventing similar tragedies from occurring in the future, and at least begin to address the plague of youth violence that is tearing the very fabric of our nation.

THE NATIONAL YOUTH VIOLENCE
COMMISSION

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 9, 1999

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, weeks after the tragedy at Columbine High School, we as a national community are still cognizant of the ordeal and attempting to make sense of this horrific incident and the other school mas-

sacres that followed it. Many of us are still asking questions and searching for reasons why our children are senselessly murdering each other in classrooms, schoolyards, streetcorners and their homes; why there is so much violence surrounding and savaging the youth of our country.

There have been several factors cited as the possible causes for this emphasis on violence: the disconnection so many youths feel from their parents, peers, schools and communities; the harmful influence of the entertainment media; the easy access children have to guns; lack of support services for alienated and mentally ill teens; and the weakening of our moral and communal safety nets.

While there are many informed opinions and hypotheses, there are very few definitive conclusions and little consensus as to who or what is responsible for this atrocity. This is a problem that can not be solved with definitive answers—there is no one answer. As a country Americans do agree that we must come together as a nation to stop this menace, which is putting all of our communities and way of life at risk.

In order to combat this difficult challenge, we must reach a national consensus on how to respond. We must carefully, deliberately, dispassionately analyze the depths of the problem. Today, Mr. BURTON, Mr. TIERNEY and I are introducing legislation to create a national commission on youth violence that will examine the many possible reasons why so many children are becoming killers and help us find solutions to diminish this imminent threat.

In order to thoroughly study the many dimensions of the problem this panel should be composed of the country's finest experts in the fields of law enforcement, teaching and counseling, parenting and family studies, child and adolescent psychology, Cabinet members, and religious leaders.

After 18 months of work, the commission would be responsible to report its conclusions to the President and Congress and recommend a series of tangible steps to take in order to reduce the level of youth violence and prevent another community from feeling the same pain and grief as the residents of Littleton.

There are several steps that must be taken by Congress and the citizens of our country in order to preserve the safety of our children. We understand that this problem is not one that can be solved over night, or with any single piece of legislation. Despite this we have legitimate policy and philosophical differences to overcome in order to tackle this problem. There is not a guarantee that with this commission that we will find these answers and solve our problems, but we believe there is hope for doing so and therefore deserves our support.

TRIBUTE TO LARRY PETERSON

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 9, 1999

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of one of Colorado's